

## Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-09

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R 150930Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4843

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

CINCEUR

S E C R E T SANAA 0102

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, YE, SA

SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

REF: SANAA 0009

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING RETURN OF AMRI, CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT APPEARS IMMINENT WITH AMRI OR ALTERNATIVELY EX-PRIMIN HAJRI REPLACING PRIMIN AYN I IN SWING TO RIGHT. COMMAND COUNCIL CHAIRMAN APPEARS INTENT ON RETURN TO FULL CIVILIAN RULE WITH APPOINTMENT NEW REPUBLICAN COUNCIL IN NEXT FEW MONTHS WITH MEMBERSHIP OF TOUX AMRI, AND HAJRI, HAJRI OR POSSIBLY AMRI (WHOEVER NOT PRIMIN) AS PRESIDENT. HAMDI, WITH SOLID MILITARY SUPPORT, WOULD KEEP KEY POWER POSITION AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. SINAN ABU LUHUM AND FAMILY APPEAR TO BE IN ECLIPSE, BUT SHOULD NOT BE COUNTED OUT. TRIBES APPEAR BEHIND HAMDI BUT WITH AMRI ADDED AS PRIMIN TO STIFFEN CONSERVATIVE POSITION.

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2. IN LAST TEN DAYS WE HAVE BEEN TAKING SOUNDINGS LOCALLY TO

ANSWER SOME OF QUESTIONS WE RAISED IN SANAA 0009 ABOUT REPERCUSSIONS OF RETURN OF FORMER STRONGMAN LT.GEN HASAN AL-AMRI. FRANTIC PACE OF POLITICAL CONSULTATION AFTER RETURN NOW SEEMS TO HAVE SLOWED SOMEWHAT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT COMMAND COUNCIL CHAIRMAN HAMDİ WANTS TO PUT END TO SPECULATION AND MANEUVERING AND HAS DECIDED TO COMPLETE RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE IN NEAR FUTURE, INCLUDING IMMINENT CHANGE OF CABINET AND APPOINTMENT NEW REPUBLICAN COUNCIL WITHIN ONE TO THREE MONTHS.

3. ALTHOUGH PREDICTION IS HAZARDOUS BUSINESS IN YEMEN, WHERE EVEN FIRMEST PLANS SUBJECT TO CHANGE FROM LAST-MINUTE PRESSURES, THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG SOURCES OF VARYING POLITICAL ORIENTATION ON SEVERAL POINTS. ONE IS THAT HAMDİ ENJOYS SOLID SUPPORT AMONG ARMED FORCES AND WILL KEEP KEY POWER POST OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. (THERE ARE SIGNS THAT ABU LUHUMİST COMMANDERS ALI ABU LUHUM OF ASİFA AND MUHAMMAD ABU LUHUM OF SIXTH ARMORED BRIGADE MAY BE EASED OUT). SECOND POINT IS THAT APPOINTMENT OF NEW REPUBLICAN COUNCIL LIKELY TO BE MADE IN COMING FEW MONTHS TO RETURN COUNTRY TO FULL CIVILIAN RULE, ALBEIT TURKISH STYLE WITH ARMED FORCES BEHIND SCENES. MEMBERSHIP PROBABLY WILL CONSIST OF HAMDİ, FORMER PRIMIN ABDALLAH AL-HAJRI (A RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVE), AND HASAN AL-AMRI. MAJORITY OF SOURCES FAVOR HAJRI AS CHAIRMAN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUGGESTION MADE SEVERAL DAYS AGO BY CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR TO ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE CHARGED WITH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS CONNECTED WITH RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE (IF HAMDİ WERE TO BECOME REPUBLICAN COUNCIL CHAIRMAN, MINIMUM AGE SPECIFIED BY CONSTITUTION WOULD HAVE TO BE LOWERED.)

4. EVERYONE WE HAVE QUERIED EXPECTS PRIMIN MUHSIN AL-AYNI TO RESIGN OR BE REMOVED SHORTLY. SHAIKHS LED BY AL-AHMAR, WHO BELIEVED TO REPRESENT SAUDI WISHES, ARE PRESSING HARD FOR HIS REMOVAL AND DISSOLUTION OF CABINET TO ELIMINATE PRIMIN'S BAATHI SUPPORTERS. SIGNIFICANTLY SHAIKHS HOSTED LARGE RECEPTION JANUARY 13 IN HONOR OF AL-AMRI, WHOM MOST SOURCES PINPOINT AS LIKELY SUCCESSOR

AS PRIMIN (MINORITY PREDICT HAJRI AS PRIMIN AND AMRI AS FUTURE CHAIRMAN OF REPUBLICAN COUNCIL). WE KNOW THAT AYNİ HAS SUDDENLY EVICTED GERMAN WFP DIRECTOR FROM FORMER'S PRIVATE RESIDENCE PRESUMABLY IN EXPECTATION HE WILL HAVE TO LEAVE PRIMIN'S OFFICIAL  
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RESIDENCE. SINCE MILITARY COMMAND COUNCIL WOULD BE DISSOLVED WITH APPOINTMENT OF REPUBLICAN COUNCIL, AYNİ WOULD LOSE BOTH HIGH POSITIONS HE NOW HOLDS AS PRIMIN AND CC MEMBER.

5. FINAL POINT OF CONSENSUS IS THAT SINAN ABU LUHUM'S FORTUNES CONTINUE TO DECLINE. HE HAS UNTIL NOW BEEN PROTECTED TO SOME EXTENT BY HAMDİ'S TOLERANCE AND PERSONAL AFFECTION. SHAIKH SINAN, HOWEVER, ON RETURN MISTAKENLY CONFIDED TO EX-ALLY, FORMER CC

MEMBER AND EX-MININT LTC HAMUD BAYDAR, THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK TO UNDERMINE HAMDI. BAYDAR, APPARENTLY HAVING ABANDONED ABU LUHUMS, RELATED CONVERSATION IMMEDIATELY TO HAMDI WHOSE FEELINGS FOR SHAIKH SINAN HAVE COOLED MARKEDLY. LATTER IS MAN WHO SHOULD NOT BE COUNTED OUT PREMATURELY, HOWEVER, AS HE USES POWERFUL PERSONALITY AND GREAT WEALTH (FOR YEMEN) HE HAS ACQUIRED TO GREAT EFFECT.

6. FROM ALL APPEARANCES HAMDI CONTINUES TO ENJOY CLOSE SUPPORT FROM AL-AHMAR AS WELL AS LOYALTY OF ARMED FORCES. SWING TO RIGHT, WHICH IN PRACTICE SEEMS TO HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED, WILL NEVERTHELESS LIMIT HIS ABILITY TO MANEUVER, SINCE HE HAS NO COUNTER-WEIGHT, EXCEPT STALEMATING THREAT OF MILITARY FORCES, TO SAUDI-BACKED CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS (RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH HAJRI, UNLIKE TRIBAL ELEMENTS, HAVE BEEN OPENLY HOSTILE TO HAMDI BUT HAVE NO INDEPENDENT POWER). MODERATE AND CONSERVATIVE SOURCES AVER THAT HAMDI AND AMRI, HAMDI'S FORMER MENTOR, WILL COOPERATE RATHER THAN COMPETE, BUT WE WONDER IF THEY ARE NOT MAKING VIRTUE OUT OF NECESSITY. AMRI, NONETHELESS, DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE ORGANIZED SUPPORT IN ARMED FORCES, SO THAT HE COULD NOT CHALLENGE HAMDI DIRECTLY EXCEPT AS PARTICIPANT IN POTENTIAL BUT NOT IMMEDIATELY LIKELY ARMY-TRIBAL CONFRONTATION. WHILE IMMEDIATE FUTURE MAY REORGANIZE YARG UNDER CONSERVATIVE-DOMINATED RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE, IT IS UNLIKELY TO END YEMENI PENCHANT FOR POLITICAL MANEUVERING. INDEED THERE MAY BE RESURGENCE OF LEFTIST SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY, IF, AS APPEARS LIKELY, AYNI AND SUPPORTERS ARE ELIMINATED FROM CABINET.  
SCOTES

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